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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **US Forest Service To Spray Lake Moomaw For Gypsy Moth In May**

Covington, Va. -- The US Forest Service will spray recreation areas around Lake Moomaw to control gypsy moths one morning between May 1 and May 20. Spraying will take place in Morris Hill Campground, Morris Hill Group Camp, Coles Point Recreation Area, and Fortney Branch Boat Ramp. No reservations for Morris Hill Campground, Morris Hill Group Camp, or the Coles Point picnic shelters will be accepted during the May 1-20 period.

The actual date for the spraying will be based on weather and the development of the gypsy moth caterpillars, which vary from year to year. On the selected day, the recreation areas will be temporarily closed while the spraying occurs. The public will be informed of the plans as they develop.

Significant numbers of gypsy moth caterpillars were observed on the Alleghany County side of Lake Moomaw in the spring of 2008. Last fall, a survey revealed that there are enough gypsy moth egg masses present to justify treating the area to reduce the threat of tree defoliation and mortality in 2009.

The areas will be sprayed from a helicopter using Btk, a natural gypsy moth disease bacterium. "We know Btk poses an extremely low risk to humans and animals, even if they touch it, breathe it, or ingest it," said project coordinator Russ MacFarlane. "However, to allay concerns and to ensure the public's safety, we feel it is important to avoid exposing people to the spray."

The gypsy moth, a European insect that was imported to the United States in the late 1860's, has a caterpillar life stage that eats the leaves of many vulnerable American tree species, especially oak trees. The stressed trees often die in large numbers, destroying the beauty of an area as well as its commercial timber value and wildlife habitat benefits. "Treating these recreation areas will help conserve the trees and shade that are so valued by visitors to Lake Moomaw," said James River Ranger District recreation forester Sharon Mohny.

Also planned for treatment are 206 acres in the Ruckers Gap area of the James River District. No special closures are announced for this area except for the actual day of spraying.

For additional information, contact the James River Ranger District at 540-962-2214.